

PLAY AREAS AND THE ADA: What You Need to Know*

- ❖ Children of all abilities deserve to play and socialize. Playgrounds are where children learn to make friends, make rules and navigate relationships - important life skills for everyone!
- ❖ All play areas for children age 2 and over in a variety of settings (including parks, schools, shopping centers, and childcare facilities except those in private homes) must be designed, constructed and altered so that they are accessible to individuals with disabilities. 2010 Standards for Accessible Design § 240.1. No safe harbor for compliance with 1991 laws, but exceptions allow some flexibility with design and alterations.
- ❖ The requirements in the Standards (Sections 206, 240 & 1008) include:
 - ✓ An accessible route to each play area: play areas < 1000 sq. ft. require min. route width of 44 inches; play areas 1000 + sq. ft., min. route width is 60 inches. Minimum height of obstacles in route is 80 inches. Minimum width for accessible routes connecting elevated play areas is 36 inches.
 - ✓ If there is more than 1 play area for children of different ages, must have accessible route to each play area
 - ✓ An accessible route to each *type* of ground level play component is required (e.g., rockers, diggers, swings, stand-alone slides). 240.2.1.1
 - ✓ The number and type of ground level play components required is based on elevated play components. See Table 240.2.1.2 (copy attached).
 - ✓ Exception: if ramps provide access to at least 50 percent of the elevated play components and the ramps go to at least 3 different types of play components, the play area need not comply with 240.2.1.2.
 - ✓ Where elevated play components are provided, at least 50% must be on an accessible route. 240.2.2
 - ✓ Ramps with < maximum 1:12 slope preferred over transfer systems
 - ✓ Ground surfaces must comply with ASTM F 1951 and must be inspected and maintained regularly and frequently to insure compliance. 1008.2.6.1.
 - ✓ Forward and side low and high reaches vary by age (ages 3-4: 20-36 inches; ages 5-8: 18-40 inches; ages 9-12: 16-44 inches); play tables need minimum knee clearance of 24 in high and 17 in. deep (1008.4.3); entry points and seats 11 inch min. and 24 inch max height. 1008.4.4.
 - ✓ When distinguishing between *types* of play components, think about the experience provided (i.e., swinging, sliding, spinning, climbing, digging).
 - ✓ The goal is to provide a variety of experiences for children who want to remain in their wheelchair or with another mobility device and who choose not to transfer to an elevated component.

**Table 240.2.1.2 Number and Types of Ground Level Play Components
Required to be on Accessible Routes (reproduced from 2010 ADA Standards)**

Number of Elevated Play Components Provided	Minimum Number of Ground Level Play Components Required to be on an Accessible Route	Minimum Number of Different Types of Ground Level Play Components Required to be on an Accessible Route
1	Not applicable	Not applicable
2 to 4	1	1
5 to 7	2	2
8 to 10	3	3
11 to 13	4	3
14 to 16	5	3
17 to 19	6	3
20 to 22	7	4
23 to 25	8	4
26 and over	8, plus 1 for each additional 3, or fraction thereof, over 25	5

For more information on ADA requirements for play areas, see www.ada.gov & www.ADAchecklist.org

*This handout contains a general summary of ADA requirements applicable to play areas and is not intended to constitute legal advice and should not be relied upon as legal advice. Please review the text of the Americans with Disabilities Act and its implementing regulations, which can be found at www.ada.gov, or consult a licensed attorney, architect or other professional with expertise in ADA compliance before designing, constructing or altering any play area.